

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE — A MODEL FOR ACTION

Plan for the future? The idea conjures up fantasies of 2015, the 25<sup>th</sup> Century, extra-terrestrial navigation, and automatons. But every tick of the clock brings the future one step nearer. The future, too, is tomorrow, and next month, and three years from now. The person who is best prepared will best survive and will most enjoy the challenges and fascinations of the years ahead.

Someone once said, "There is nothing so constant as change." Any viable and vigorous program of education must anticipate and adapt to change. The current concern and interest in education, as a result of No Child Left Behind, the Perkins Act, and past reports such as the Carnegie Report, the Goodlad Report, the Nation at Risk report, and others, suggests that the time is ripe for a serious study of educational programs and making modifications and improvements where necessary. Projecting into the future even a few years will assist in the assimilation of change as it becomes necessary or desirable.

Education should be riding the crest of the wave of social and technological advancement, not floundering in the froth and foam after the wave has passed. We must keep an eye to the future while also maintaining stability and constancy from a review of past successes. An eye to the future discloses the following concerns, among others:

- How can plans be made for something which can hardly be anticipated?
- Must the future be forecast in black and white or broadcast over the media before plans dare be made for tomorrow?
- Are there some aspects of program planning which can be expected with sufficient surety to risk a gamble?
- Can a plan for the future allow adequate flexibility to adapt to unanticipated changes?
- In planning, how far into the future dare we venture?

Lacking the psychic powers of Jean Dixon, the crystal ball of the gypsies, or the deavings of the prophets, how do you plan for the future? Below are offered some steps to aid in planning the future and helping to develop the necessary viability, credibility, and public acceptance of our educational programs.

It is suggested that a **five year** projection is a reasonable length of time. This allows sufficient time to accommodate some fairly extensive program changes yet doesn't extend beyond the limits of imagination. Remember, the dreams and visions conjured up must eventually evolve into practical application and to the nuts and bolts of program implementation. A word of warning: commitment to the concept of the five year plan is necessary to make it worth starting! Planning for the future is time consuming—it will take 2 or 3 weeks of otherwise free time. The end product, however, is a fascination and the process becomes an obsession.

Step 1: Put on the old (new?) *thinking* cap! Brainstorm with colleagues! Don't be afraid to dream! It's your turn at Fantasy Island! If the ideal program ***five*** years from now were to be envisioned, what would it be like in relation to budget, curriculum, facilities, student clientele, prerequisites, student placement, public relations, etc.? Read relevant literature. What are the most up-to-date ideas? Review pertinent studies or projections relating to efficiency and effectiveness in education. In conjunction with this, reflect on the present course of your program. Considering the immediate past, in which direction does the program seem to be headed? Does this course seem appropriate as suggested by advisory councils, national and regional studies, and state, local, and university departments of education, or should a change of emphasis be effected?

Step 2: Determine *goals* for the program based on past history, present course, and dreams for the future. The number of goals selected is arbitrary, however, too few will give limited vision, too many will become burdensome. It is suggested to develop eight to ten goals such as: (Numbering by the decimal or digital method will help in keeping the whole plan organized.)

- 1.00 Improve Instructional Quality  
(Better curriculum materials, more use of appropriate media materials, infusion of computerized techniques, etc.)
- 2.00 Ascertain Program Effectiveness  
(Follow-up study of graduates, survey current students, survey of employers, etc.)
- 3.00 Develop and Integrate New Classes or New Programs  
(Result of review of economic projections, public demands, suggestions of advisory committees, etc.)
- 4.00 Utilize Facilities to Optimum Efficiency  
(Best use of space and equipment, better scheduling, outside resources, etc.)
- 5.00 Conduct Appropriate Public Relations  
(Program brochures, public meetings, advisory committees, displays, etc.)
- 6.00 Serve as Resource Persons to Community Agencies  
(Seminars, evening classes, presentations to groups, etc.)
- 7.00 Cultivate Relations with Industry  
(Advisory committees, industry lecturers, plant tours, school adoption, etc.)

#### 8.00 Develop Program into a Cohesive Unit

(Participation in professional groups, student clubs, program continuity, etc.)

Step 3: After the goals are determined, specify objectives to meet the goals. These can be stated in modified behavioral terms delineating how much of the goals can be achieved. There should probably be 4 or 5 objectives for each goal suggesting how it can be accomplished.

Step 4: An additional refinement could be called strategies. These are statements of as many ideas as possible on how to accomplish the objectives. There might be 4-5 strategies for each of the previously stated objectives. From these strategies it becomes relatively easy to make assignments to individual faculty for more efficient completion.

Step 5: A critical inclusion, often neglected in planning, is the sequence of development. It must be realized that this is a multi-year plan and all of the improvements and developments cannot be accomplished at once. It is necessary to prioritize, differentiate between short-term and long-term goals, consider the limitations, and determine a sequence to achieve each of the originally stated goals. Consider the following:

- What can be done this year toward goal attainment?
- What should be done next year?
- When can attainment of the goal be realistically expected?

It is suggested that one or two of the goals be selected as a focal point each year. During the first year special efforts would be directed toward attainment of one or two goals. In the second and succeeding years, additional goals are emphasized each year while also at least maintaining constancy in the goals stressed previously. Over the five year period, then, each of the 8 or 10 goals would receive special attention and emphasis. The exact level of performance may not be possible to project. Expectations may also fall a bit short when implementation of the idea is tried, but it is better to have tried and had limited success than never to have tried at all. As someone said, "A man's aim should exceed his grasp, else what's a heaven for."

Step 6: The last step is the updating of the development plan. Review the plan each year, evaluate progress, and make additional refinements as necessary. New ideas will emerge which should be jotted down. These can be added into the current plan as appropriate or can be added on to the plan to extend it even further into the future. Be sure to share the Plan with new personnel so that they can have the benefit of the direction it affords. Planning for the future is a never ending but fascinating process. The sequence follows the basic PIER (Plan, Implement, Evaluate,

Review) concept. It becomes a continual cycle of review and update.

Here is an example of the various suggested steps as they relate to one of the selected goals:

- Step 1 - Thinking, Brainstorming

In brainstorming sessions with colleagues it was determined that the effectiveness of the current program should be determined.

- Step 2 - Goal

2.00 Ascertain Program Effectiveness

Education and educational fields must reflect the needs and interests of the community while also assisting in the development of students to become productive members of society and aware of their responsibilities in our nation and our world.

- Step 3 - Objective

2.10 Within the next three months surveys will be conducted to determine program effectiveness.

- Step 4 - Strategies

2.11 A community survey will be conducted to determine the public acceptance of our current program.

2.12 A survey of students will be conducted...

2.13 A survey of alumni will be conducted...

2.14 A survey of employers will be conducted...

(Objective)

2.20 Within the next 3 months National Exam Scores will be evaluated.

(Strategies)

2.21 SAT scores will be compared (5 years)

2.22 ACT scores will be compared (5 years)

- Step 5 - Sequence of Development

First Year Emphasis

a. Develop student recruitment materials (Goal 5.00)

b. More use of media materials (Goal 1.00)

Second Year Emphasis

a. Community and Department surveys (Goal 2.00)

b. Competency based instruction (Goal 1.00)

Third Year Emphasis

a. Etc.

Planning and implementing for the future requires a high level of interest, fortitude, and determination to persevere in the development of the programs which will be required to meet the demands of the ensuing decades as we anticipate the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

## UTILIZING A PRIORITY MATRIX

It is becoming increasingly recognized that effective leadership is democratic rather than dictatorial. This requires input from all affected parties and can become a slow, agonizing, and inefficient process. In major decisions which affect department and program directions, however, all faculty should have the opportunity for input and their opinions should be valued. One of the most effective methods for a group determination of priorities is through the use of a priority matrix. This is basically a chart where problems or issues are listed. All appropriate personnel then individually prioritize them on a scale from 1-(n) with 1 being the most critical concern. The individual prioritizations are then transferred to a master form and the rows are added to determine the group priority of each problem or issue. These could then become the basis for the development of goals, objectives, strategies, and sequence for problem solution as previously outlined. Table 1 shows a format for a priority matrix which can be used to prioritize problems or other issues.

Table 1 - Form for Priority Matrix

Problem or Issue	Individual Prioritization							Total	Rank
Syllabi Outdated	3	2	5	1	2	1	2	16	2
No Professionalism	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	18	3
Program is Outdated	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	10	1
No Computer Literacy	4	4	3	4	5	4	6	30	4

(Etc. for 10-12 problems or issues)

It will be noted from the above example that the group prioritization indicates the number one problem (because of the fewest number of points) is that the program is outdated. Number two is that the course syllabi are outdated, etc. This has used the collective expertise of the group to identify the most pressing concerns and the major issues needing attention. The final priorities may be significantly different than any one individual might have determined. This process has utilized all concerned individuals and, hopefully, because they have each been involved rather than being dictated to, each will desire to participate in the solution of the problems.

## PRIORITY MATRIX

[illegible]

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**  
**WORKSHEET**

**Goals:**

1.00

2.00

3.00

4.00

5.00

## **Objectives:**

1.00 (Goal)

1.10

1.20

1.30

1.40

2.00 (Goal)

2.10

2.20

2.30

2.40

3.00

3.10

3.20

3.30

3.40



# SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT

FALL \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

WINTER \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

FALL \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

WINTER \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

FALL \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

WINTER \_\_\_\_\_  
Emphasis:

## **Steps for Implementation/Strategies**

### 1:10 (Objective)

1.11

1.12

1.13

1.14

### 1.20

1.21

1.22

1.23

1.24

1.25

### 1.30

1.31

1.32

1.33

1.34

### 1.40

1.41

1.42

1.43